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DEPARTMENT FOR S, P, ISN AND EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2017

TAGS: MNUC PARM KNNP IR AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA RESPONSE TO NIE ON IRAN'S NUCLEAR PROGRAM

REF: A. STATE 162558

1B. STATE 162412

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Daniel A. Clune for reasons 1.4 (b),(d).

11. (C) DCM delivered Ref A unclassified non-paper and points to David J. Ritchie, Deputy Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), on December 4. Ritchie was joined by Olivia Borthwick, Director, Middle East Section. (Other Mission personnel conveyed the classified version separately to Peter Varghese, Director-General of the Office of National Assessments.)

12. (C) Ritchie responded that the NIE report would change Australian policy. Australia would still strongly support getting Iran to comply with the existing UN Security Council resolutions and to cooperate with IAEA requests in a transparent and verifiable manner. He said he hoped the UNSC would successfully pass a third resolution, barring obstacles from Russia and China. Ritchie said Kevin Rudd, Australia's new prime minister, was strong on both nonproliferation and on Iran -- Rudd had threatened to bring Iranian President Ahmadinejad before an international tribunal on charges of inciting genocide for his statements about wiping Israel off the map -- so the United States could expect that Australian policy would stay at the tough end on Iran.

13. (C) Ritchie observed that there would be significant policy implications if Iran had made a strategic decision to abandon its efforts to acquire a nuclear weapon, and questioned the DCM closely on the NIE findings. He noted ruefully that acquiring good intelligence on Iran was difficult, expressing doubt that Iran would completely abandon the significant effort it had made in its enrichment program.

14. (C) Ritchie undertook to forward the demarche to Prime Minister Rudd's attention through the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Post will report by septel further discussions Under Secretary Burns had with Foreign Minister Smith and Defence Minister Fitzgibbon.

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